



Department of Justice

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MICHIGAN WOMAN SENTENCED FOR HER ROLE IN SMUGGLING SCORES OF IRAQIS AND JORDANIANS INTO THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON – Neeran H. Zaia, 56, of Sterling Heights, Mich., was sentenced to 15 years in prison for her role in a conspiracy to smuggle Iraqis and Jordanians into the United States and for bringing and attempting to bring Iraqis and Jordanians to the United States for the purpose of private financial gain, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor of the District of Columbia announced.

Zaia was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Rosemary Collyer in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Judge Collyer also sentenced Zaia to 10 years of supervised release.

Zaia pleaded guilty on Sept. 6, 2007, and admitted that she accepted payment from Iraqi and Jordanian migrants to transport them to South America, where she facilitated arrangements with other smugglers associated with the conspiracy. Those persons, in turn, brought or attempted to bring the migrants to the United States. On Aug. 3, 2007, Zaia's husband, Thaer Omran Ismail Asaifi, was sentenced by Judge Collyer to 72 months in prison for his role in the conspiracy and for alien smuggling.

Zaia was previously convicted on three counts of bribery, seven counts of visa fraud and one count of alien smuggling in the Eastern District of Michigan in 1992.

The charges arise from an extraterritorial undercover investigation initiated and led by the Washington Field Office of the Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), with the substantial assistance of personnel and resources from ICE's Detroit Office; the Peruvian National Police, and Peruvian Immigration authorities. The State Department's Diplomatic Security Service also assisted with the investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bruce R. Hegyi of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, and by Trial Attorneys Jim Oliver of the Civil Rights Division and Pragna Soni, for the Domestic Security Section of the Criminal Division.

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